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HISTORY

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13

The Aftermath of the Fourth Crusad

250	500	750	1000	1250	1500
1204	Byzantine Empire divided among the western powers				
1259	Beginning of the Palaiologan dynasty				
1261	Byzantine recovery of Constantinople				

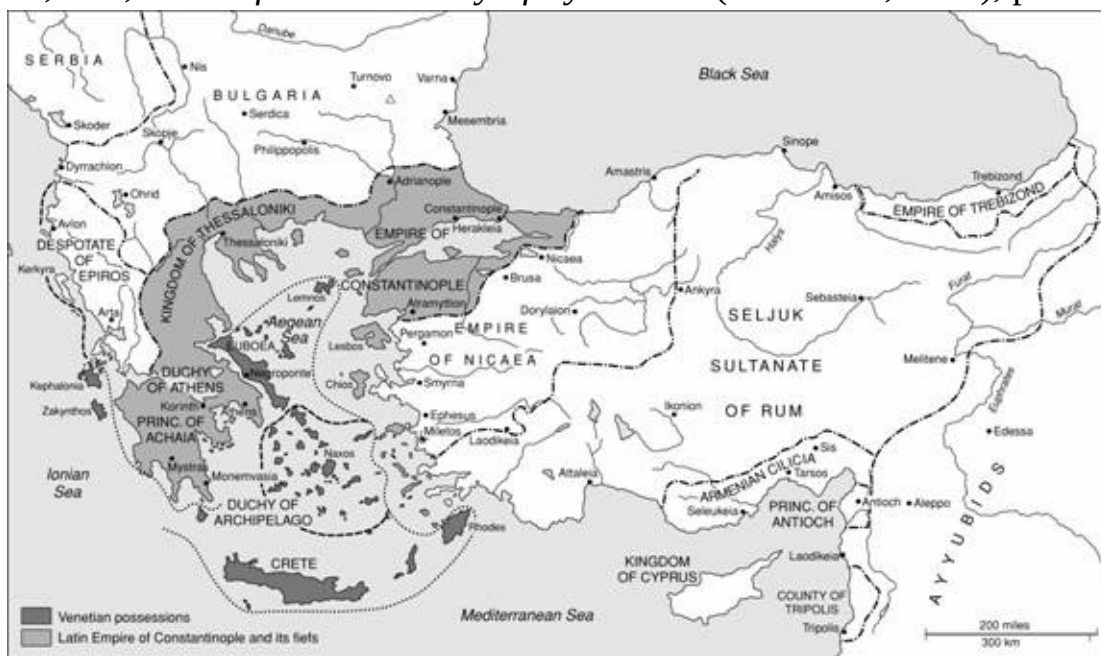
The Latin Empire and the Byzantine Successor States

With the capture of Constantinople and the dismemberment of its territory, the Byzantine Empire had essentially ceased to exist. According to the terms of the treaty between the Crusaders and the Venetians, an emperor was chosen for what can now be called the Latin empire. Although Boniface of Montferrat had been the primary military leader of the Crusade, Baldwin of Flanders was chosen as Latin emperor and he was crowned on May 16, 1204, in Hagia Sophia. The terms of the treaty specified that if a Crusader were elected emperor then the patriarch would be a Venetian, so Thomas Morosini became the first Latin patriarch of Constantinople.

Thus, the forms of the old Byzantine system remained, but the essence was significantly different and it was completely under Crusader control. Furthermore, the old centralized government was replaced by an array of feudal principalities, all of which in theory owed loyalty to the emperor in Constantinople, but which were in fact independent states. According to the *Partitio Romaniae* the emperor was to receive a quarter of the empire, with the remaining three-quarters to be split between the Venetians and the many

crusading knights who were to be rewarded for their service in this way. The Latin emperor was given territories in both Asia Minor and Europe, but the greatest power was held by Boniface of Montferrat, who refused to accept the territories assigned to him in Asia Minor but instead seized Macedonia and Thessaly and established himself as king of Thessaloniki. Farther south in Greece, Boniface established himself as lord of Athens, and he put Otto de la Roche in charge of Attica and Boeotia. He also lent his support to William of Champlitte and Geoffrey of Villehardouin, who established the principality of the Morea (the Peloponnesos), which became the most thoroughly westernized of the territories taken by the Crusaders and developed a rich culture of its own, blending western and Byzantine traditions, not much influenced by events elsewhere in the region.

Map 13.1 The situation after the Fourth Crusade, ca. 1214 (after A. Kazhdan et al., eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (New York, 1991), p. 357)



Relations between the Crusaders and the conquered population varied considerably from place to place, but the westerners were always a minority, and the majority of the people retained both the Greek language and Orthodox Christianity. The papacy naturally made strenuous attempts to convert the local population: western monasteries were established in many places, and most churches were theoretically under the control of a Catholic bishop, but these attempts did little other than to strengthen the Orthodox in their dedication to age-old tradition. Among the *archontes* (the local Byzantine elite), however,

there was a real rapprochement with the Crusader leaders, since many of the *archontes* were incorporated, more or less fully, into the feudal system. Nonetheless, they too retained the basics of their Byzantine culture and religion, although they accepted many features of western court life. In terms of landownership and use the situation varied from place to place, with private ownership of land mingled with land held under feudal contract.

Figure 13.1 A glazed bowl. Byzantine glazed ceramics developed from the seventh century onward, based in large part on models from Persia and even China. There was a thriving industry in ceramic production, with many regional centers and different styles. This small bowl, decorated with incising (called *sgraffito*) and colors of green and yellow, dates to the late thirteenth or fourteenth century and comes from the Levant. Photo © Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Image Collections & Fieldwork Archives, Washington DC.



The Venetians did not want large territories, since their primary interest was trade, and they sought mainly to control the major ports and way-stations along the sea routes between Venice and the East. The Venetians thus took three-eighths of Constantinople itself and many of the islands leading from the Adriatic to Constantinople, including those in the Ionian Sea, many in the Aegean, Crete, and the important ports on the Hellespont.

Box 13.1 Destruction of Ancient Art in the Latin Sack of Constantinople

Despite the poor condition of the empire at the time of the Fourth Crusade, Constantinople was still one of the wealthiest cities of the world. Along with manuscripts and religious relics and monuments, the Byzantine emperors had, over the centuries, decorated Constantinople with many of the great masterpieces of art that had survived from antiquity, although the Christian population of the city naturally had mixed feelings about some of the ancient sculptures that represented pagan gods and goddesses or mythological themes. Nonetheless it is clear that educated Byzantines at least were aware of the beauty and historical significance of this rich cultural tradition. Niketas Choniates, perhaps the most important Byzantine historian of his age, describes the lamentable fate of many of these works of classical art and other treasures during the Latin sack of Constantinople in 1204:

From the very beginning they [the Latins] revealed their race to be lovers of gold; they conceived of a new method of plundering, which had completely escaped the notice of all who had [just] sacked the imperial city. Having opened the graves of those emperors which were in the burial ground situated in the area of the church of Christ's Holy Apostles, they stripped all of them during the night and, if any golden ornament, pearl, or precious stone still lay inviolate in these [tombs], they sacrilegiously seized it. When they found the corpse of the Emperor Justinian, which had remained undisturbed for so many years, they marvelled at it, but they did not refrain from [looting] the funerary adornments. We may say that these Westerners spared neither the living nor the dead. They manifested [toward all], beginning with God and his servants [i.e., the clergy], complete indifference and impiety: quickly enough they tore down the curtain in the Great Church [Hagia Sophia], the value of which was reckoned in millions of purest silver pieces, since it was entirely interwoven with gold.

Even now they were still desirous of money (for nothing can satiate the avarice of the barbarians). They eyed the bronze statues and threw them into the fire. And so the bronze statue of Hera, standing in the agora of Constantine, was broken into pieces and consigned to the flames. The head of this statue, which could hardly be drawn by four oxen yoked together, was brought to the great palace. The [Statue of] Paris [also called] Alexander opposite it, was cast off its base. This statue was connected with that of the goddess Aphrodite to whom the apple of Eris [Discord] was depicted as being awarded by Paris ... These barbarians – who do not appreciate beauty – did not neglect to overturn the statues standing in the Hippodrome or any other marvellous works. Rather, these too they turned into coinage [nomisma], exchanging great things [i.e., art] for small [i.e., money], thus acquiring petty coins at the expense of those things created at enormous cost. They then threw down the great Hercules Trihesperus, magnificently constructed on a base and girded with the skin of a lion, a terrifying thing to see even in bronze ... He was represented as standing, carrying in his hands neither quiver nor arrows nor club, but having his right foot and right hand extended and his left foot bent at the knee with the left hand raised at the elbow ... He [the statue of Hercules] was very broad in the chest and shoulders and had thick hair, plump buttocks, and strong arms, and was of such huge size, I think, as Lysimachus [Lysippus?] considered the real Hercules to have been – Lysimachus who sculpted from bronze this first and last great masterpiece of his hands. The statue was so large that the rope around his thumb had the size of a man's belt and the lower portion of the leg, the height of a man. But those [i.e., the Latins] who separate manly vigor from other virtues and claim it for themselves (considering it the most important quality) did not leave this Hercules (although it was the epitome of this attribute) untouched. (Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, ed. J. L. van Dieten (New York and Berlin, 1975), pp. 647–51; in D. J. Geanakoplos, *Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization seen through Contemporary Eyes* (Chicago, 1984), pp. 371–2)

Beyond the loose control of the Crusader states, what we may call Byzantine

successor states began to emerge on the land formerly controlled by the empire. These, to a lesser or greater degree, sought both to replicate the Byzantine administrative machinery and to appeal to Byzantine ideals of political and cultural identity. More specifically, the Byzantine successor states maintained, either explicitly or implicitly, that they were the rightful claimants to the Byzantine heritage and that they had the rights to the loyalty and devotion of all who had formerly lived inside its borders. There was, therefore, a natural rivalry not only between Byzantines and Crusaders, but also among those who claimed for themselves the Byzantine heritage.

Figure 13.2 Incised bowl. The technique used in making this bowl is similar to *sgraffito*, but in this case the background of the figure is scraped away, leaving the image a lighter color. This bowl, probably to be dated to the thirteenth century, represents a seated couple in an unusual but attractive pose. Some authorities have suggested that the couple may be the legendary hero Digenis Akrikas and his wife, but it is probably simply a wedding scene. Perhaps it was originally a commemorative gift given to the newly wed couple. The bowl demonstrates significant skill and originality on the part of the artist. The representation of the couple has even been favorably compared to works of modern art, including those of Picasso. Reproduced with permission from the Trustees of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens.



The oldest of these successor states had actually existed before the fall of Constantinople to the Crusaders in 1204. The so-called Empire of Trebizond (on the southeast shore of the Black Sea), which owed its independence to the general turmoil within the empire at the beginning of the thirteenth century, was ruled by the family of the Grand Komnenoi Alexios and David, grandsons of Andronikos I. Locked into the northeastern corner of Asia Minor, the Empire of Trebizond held out for centuries against all enemies, and even outlasted the final collapse of Byzantium in the fifteenth century, but it was destined not to play a larger role on the stage of history.

Ultimately more important than Trebizond was the so-called Empire of Nicaea.

This was territory in northwestern Asia Minor occupied by Theodore I Laskaris when Boniface of Montferrat abandoned it to press his claims in Macedonia. Laskaris was the son-in-law of Alexios III and he held the title of “despot” (*despotes*). He sought to organize resistance to Latin rule in Asia Minor, but he was originally pressed with difficulties all around, at first from David Komnenos of Trebizond and then from the supporters of the Latin emperor, who wished to assert his rights in this area. Laskaris was saved, however, when the Crusaders were defeated by the Bulgarian tsar Kalojan in a battle at Adrianople on April 14, 1205 (Map 9.1). The Latin emperor Baldwin was taken prisoner at the battle, never again to return to Constantinople, and Louis of Blois, Latin claimant to Nicaea, was killed. This left Laskaris free to consolidate his gains and organize a state that laid full claim to the old Byzantine heritage. Abandoning the title of despot, in 1205 Theodore was acclaimed as emperor; in 1208 he was solemnly crowned by Michael Autoreianos, who had been chosen as patriarch of Constantinople in exile. From this time onward an Orthodox Byzantine emperor and patriarch, resident at Nicaea, opposed their Catholic western counterparts in Constantinople itself.

Henry, Baldwin’s brother and successor as Latin emperor, won some support among the Greeks of Thrace, but his invasion of Asia Minor in 1206 was thwarted by renewed hostility from Kalojan (who, however, died in 1207). At the same time Theodore had to deal with protracted opposition from the Seljuk sultanate of Rum (Ikonion), with whom the deposed emperor Alexios III had sought asylum. The Seljuks concluded a treaty with the Latin empire against Theodore Laskaris, but the latter ultimately triumphed, and the sultan himself fell in battle with the reviving Byzantine state in 1211. War between the Latin empire and the Empire of Nicaea continued indecisively until 1214, when a peace treaty was signed, providing for temporarily stable frontiers.

Interestingly enough, although its territories were confined to a small strip of northwest Asia Minor, between those of the Latin empire and the Seljuk sultanate, the pre-eminence of the Empire of Nicaea was generally recognized among the Balkan Slavs. Thus, in 1219 Sava, the son of Stefan Nemanja, was crowned as the first autocephalous (independent) archbishop of Serbia, and he allied with Nicaea in a struggle to defend an independent Serbia.

The Empire of Trebizond had relied on Latin support in its rivalry with Nicaea, and the peace between Constantinople and Nicaea meant that Trebizond was left without an ally. The result was that in 1214 Theodore Laskaris was able to annex most of Trebizond’s western possessions, as far as Sinope, while the Seljuks

took Sinope and exercised significant influence in Trebizond itself. The Empire of Trebizond was to survive for another quarter-millennium, but it was not again to lay claim to Byzantine universality.

The Despotate of Epiros was another Byzantine successor state, and it was to prove a more long-lasting rival to the Empire of Nicaea. Immediately after the fall of Constantinople in 1204 Michael Angelos (cousin of Alexios II and Isaac II) seized control of the northwestern part of the Greek mainland, from Dyrrachium to the Gulf of Korinth. With its capital in Arta, the rulers of Epiros also laid claim to the Byzantine heritage, and they competed equally against the Venetians along the coast, the Frankish kingdom of Thessaloniki in the north, and – ultimately – the Empire of Nicaea, which was its main competitor for the Byzantine tradition. After 1215 the ruler of Epiros was Michael's half-brother Theodore, who proudly took for himself the three imperial names of Angelos Doukos Komnenos, and who managed to capture Peter of Courtney, the newly crowned Latin emperor, as he was on his way through the mountains of Albania. Theodore pushed further against the kingdom of Thessaloniki, which had been weak after the death of its founder, Boniface of Montferrat (killed in 1207). By 1224 Theodore was master of Thessaloniki, and one of the Crusader states on Byzantine territory had ceased to exist. After this success, Theodore assumed the imperial purple and styled himself emperor, making him a clear rival to the emperor of Nicaea.

Figure 13.3 Cistercian monastery of Zaraka. In the thirteenth century the Latin prince of Achaia asked the Cistercian order to establish monasteries in Greece to help in the conversion of the Byzantines to Latin Christianity and to bring the rugged landscape under cultivation. One of the monasteries built was that of Zaraka, near the ancient city of Stymphalos. The substantial remains of a Gothic church, complete with western-style sculpture, still stand, abandoned when the western mission failed. Photo: Timothy E. Gregory.



The Reconquest of Constantinople

In Nicaea Theodore I Laskaris died in 1222, passing the throne to his son-in-law John III Doukos Vatatzes (1222–54). Theodore's brothers sought to claim the throne for themselves, with Latin assistance, but John resolutely put them down. He gained control of most of the islands in the eastern Aegean and responded to an appeal from the people of Adrianople by sending troops to Thrace, establishing his presence in Europe and in effect closing Constantinople in on two sides. At this point, however, Epiros and Bulgaria, which both coveted the same prize, intervened, and Vatatzes was forced to withdraw.

The tsar of Bulgaria, Ivan Asen II, was a formidable power, and he had ambitions similar to those of Symeon of Bulgaria in the tenth century: the conquest of Constantinople and the formation of a Bulgaro-Byzantine state. The Latin ruler, Baldwin II, was a minor, and an alliance was formed whereby Baldwin would marry Asen's daughter. This caused Theodore of Epiros to break his alliance with Bulgaria, but at the Battle of Klokotnica in 1230 (in Bulgaria on the Marcia River) Asen and the Bulgarians prevailed, and Theodore was captured and blinded. He was succeeded by his brother Manuel, who managed to

hold on to Thessaloniki, but Asen took over most of Theodore's conquests in Macedonia and Thrace, and emerged as the most powerful figure in the Balkans. This turn of events caused the Latins to reconsider their alliance with Asen, who therefore allied with Nicaea. Asen and John Vatatzes besieged Constantinople in 1235–6, but Asen soon changed positions once again, and the Bulgaro-Byzantine alliance collapsed. Asen died in 1241 and Bulgarian power declined, in part as a result of the invasion of the Mongols, who ravaged the Balkans and the Near East. Many of Nicaea's enemies, including Bulgaria and the sultanate of Ikonion, were forced to pay tribute to the Mongols, but the Empire of Nicaea emerged unscathed.

John Vatatzes was thus able to consolidate his power in the Balkans, culminating with his seizure of Thessaloniki in 1246 and the capture of most of the territories that Asen II had taken from Epiros. Under the influence of the aged Theodore Angelos, Epiros offered some resistance, but Vatatzes' forces were superior and the rulers of Epiros were forced to recognize him as emperor. They, in turn, received from him the title of despot, and Epiros continued to exist for some time as a semi-independent Byzantine principality.

Box 13.2 Leon Sgouros, Tyrant of Nauplion

Toward the end of the eleventh century the Argolid, in the northeast Peloponnesos, came under the control of the powerful local family of the Sgouroi. Such phenomena had already become common in Asia Minor. Around 1200 Leon Sgouros succeeded his father as the "tyrant" of Nauplion and began to expand his territory dramatically in the chaos that characterized the Byzantine Empire in the years leading up to the Fourth Crusade. He conquered Argos and Korinth in 1202–3 and defended himself against an expedition sent by the emperor Alexios III. Sgouros then brutally murdered the bishops of Argos and Korinth by having them pushed from the heights of the castle, either at Nauplion or at Korinth. His attack on Athens with the aid of pirates from Aigina was unsuccessful: the bishop Michael Choniates managed to hold the acropolis, but the troops of Sgouros burned the lower city. For this and earlier actions Sgouros earned the hatred of Choniates and the reputation of a ruthless and powerhungry ruler. From Athens he moved to the north and in 1204 he conquered Euboea and Thebes, crossed through Thermopylae and entered the Thessalian city of Larissa.

In Larissa Sgouros met with the then-deposed emperor Alexios III and his wife Euphrosyne. An alliance was arranged whereby Leon married Alexios' daughter, Eudokia Angelina; Alexios hoped that Sgouros would help him regain his throne, while the tyrant sought to consolidate his control over central and southern Greece, essentially independent of the central Byzantine state. Events, however, turned out very differently from what either had expected, since by then the soldiers of the Fourth Crusade had taken Constantinople.

The western army that entered Greece was commanded by Boniface of Montferrat, the king of Thessaloniki, who had not been granted this area in the partition of the empire but who saw a military void and decided to take advantage of it. As Boniface descended into Greece, Sgouros fled

to the south, where he tried to make a stand against the Franks at Thermopylae. For the first time after the fall of Constantinople the crusading army met determined resistance. It is impossible to know if Sgouros saw himself as a new Leonidas, but his violent and reckless temperament does not make this impossible. As it turned out, however, this attempt was unsuccessful because, as the historian Niketas Choniates tells us, the people of that area submitted quickly to Boniface, refusing to resist what they thought was superior force. Sgouros apparently attempted another stand at the Isthmos of Korinth, but this too failed, and he ascended the heights of Akrokorinth, the citadel high above Korinth, to make a last stand. Boniface feared to bypass this famous fortress, so he settled down, from the beginning of 1205, for a long siege.

Faced finally with resistance, at Korinth and Nauplion, Boniface wearied of the campaign, far from his base of power in Thessaloniki. He came to an agreement with the Frankish knights William Champlitte and Geoffrey de Villehardouin, and they were left in charge of the task of subduing the Byzantines in the Peloponnesos. In this they were aided by Michael Angelos Doukas, the ruler of Epiros, who allied with the Franks in their conquest of the region. The siege at Korinth dragged on for years, until Leon Sgouros, apparently despondent and ready for a final act of violent resistance, rode his horse off the side of Akrokorinth and thus died.

Historians have recently spent much energy on the analysis of the frequently contradictory sources on this man and the exact sequence of events, arguing, for example, over whether Sgouros' death took place in 1208 or 1209 and whether it was at Korinth or at Nauplion. There are, further, two parallel stories about the cause of his death: the more popular one about his fatal fall from the citadel and another, less romantic one, that he was accidentally killed by a western knight. It is clear that he was a violent, and probably not very likable, man, but his actions as the only Byzantine to offer armed resistance to the crusaders have perpetuated his memory. On the one hand he represents a broader phenomenon of the break-up of the Byzantine state well before the arrival of the Fourth Crusade, but on the other he can be seen as the harbinger of the Byzantine resistance that was to develop in the years to come. He was buried in the cathedral church of Nauplion and survived by his widow, the daughter of the equally unfortunate emperor Alexios III. The French version of the Chronicle of the Morea paid Leon Sgouros grudging respect, describing him as a "villainous Greek man," contrasting him to "all the noble Greek men," who surrendered to the Franks without a struggle.

Vatatzes cultivated diplomatic relations with the West, in an effort to isolate the Latin empire politically and militarily. He formed an especially cordial relationship with the German emperor Frederick II and carried out negotiations with the papacy for the union of the churches. Vatatzes was at least originally willing to subjugate the Orthodox church to the pope in return for alliance against the Latin empire. In the end, however, these arrangements went nowhere, in part because Vatatzes' military success made western help unnecessary. Vatatzes was especially concerned to restore the system of defensive fortifications in the empire and to strengthen the economy; he tried to restrict imports and dependence on western traders, forbidding his subjects from purchasing luxury imports. John III might well have taken Constantinople himself, but in his later years he suffered from epilepsy and in 1254 he died.

John III was succeeded by his son Theodore II (1254–8), who took the name

Laskaris after his mother. Theodore II was an accomplished scholar and author, and he surrounded himself with other men of letters. He was of rather irritable temperament, and he distrusted the leading aristocratic families. As a result there were frequent disagreements between the aristocracy and the emperor, who selected advisers of humble status. Theodore, like his father, suffered from epilepsy and he died in 1258, leaving his 7-year-old son John IV to succeed him. After some maneuvering, the regency was seized by Michael Palaiologos, a member of a great aristocratic family that had risen to prominence under John Vatatzes. Palaiologos assumed the title of despot, but by the beginning of 1259 he was crowned as co-emperor with the young John IV, whom he essentially ignored for the next two years.

Michael VIII (1259–82) was immediately faced with serious military problems when Manfred of Sicily, son of Frederick II, allied with Epiros, the principality of Achaia, and King Uroš of Serbia against Nicaea. Manfred seized Kerkyra and several of the cities along the Adriatic coast, and the anti- Byzantine alliance marched into Macedonia. Michael sent his brother, the Sebastokrator John Palaiologos, to meet the enemy, and in a crucial battle at Pelagonia in 1259 (Map 9.1) he decisively defeated them: most of the Latin knights perished on the battlefield, and the prince of Achaia, William Villehardouin, was captured.

Michael VIII, now confident of victory, set his sights clearly on Constantinople. Venice was the only power that could hinder his plans, so in 1261 Michael countered this threat by an alliance with Genoa, now Venice's economic and naval rival in the eastern Mediterranean; in return for military aid, Genoa was granted trading privileges and significant tax remissions, similar to those granted to the Venetians earlier in the treaty of 1082. In July of 1261 the Byzantine commander Alexios Strategopoulos camped in the neighborhood of Constantinople and, to his surprise, found the city practically undefended. On July 15, 1261, he took the city and the Latin empire ceased to exist; a month later Michael VIII made his triumphal entrance into Constantinople and, amid the joyful inhabitants of the city, he made his way along the traditional triumphal route to Hagia Sophia. In September the patriarch performed the

Box 13.3 William Villehardouin and the Parliament of Ladies

Geoffrey de Villehardouin (nephew of the historian of the same name) cooperated with several other knights of the Fourth Crusade in the actual occupation of southern Greece. From 1209

onward Geoffrey I was Prince of Achaia (the Peloponnesos) and he organized the area on a feudal model, with western knights in control of all the important areas. He was succeeded by his son Geoffrey II sometime between 1226 and 1231 and then in 1246 by his younger son William (Guillaume) II.

Called “Long-Tooth” by some, William II expanded the principality of Achaia to its greatest extent, capturing Monemvasia and building a castle at Mystras, near Sparta. He was, however, decisively defeated by the forces of Michael VIII at the Battle of Pelagonia (Macedonia) in 1259. William escaped from the battlefield and hid, but he was captured by the Nicene forces and held prisoner. Michael VIII took Constantinople shortly thereafter and demanded that William cede the whole of the Peloponnesos to the Byzantines in return for his freedom. William refused (on the basis that the lands of Greece did not technically belong to him), so he and the other knights also being held prisoner remained in a Byzantine prison, away from their families. A high council of the nobles of the principality was called together at Nikli (in Arkadia), but interestingly enough this was made up largely of the wives and widows of the captive or slain nobles of Achaia and the council has come to be called the “Ladies’ Parliament.” The women were tired of the protracted absence of the men and agreed to most of the Byzantine demands, ceding the major castles of Monemvasia, Maina, and Mystras, which were turned over to the empire in 1262. Thus, William gained his freedom but the events signaled the beginning of a revival of Byzantine power in southern Greece.

FURTHER READING

W. Miller, *The Latins in the Levant: A History of Frankish Greece (1204–1566)*. Cambridge, 1908, pp. 116–19.

second coronation of the emperor, along with his wife Theodora and young son Andronikos, thus assuring the survival of the newly founded dynasty.

Michael had gained control of a city that had suffered considerably from the Latin occupation. Churches had been despoiled and basic services neglected. Michael set about immediately strengthening the defenses of Constantinople, especially the Sea Walls, and rebuilding churches and monasteries. He sought to revive the imperial fleet with the construction of new ships, but his expenses quickly outgrew the resources he had at his disposal, and he was forced to resort to the devaluation of the *hyperperon*, as the Byzantine gold coin continued to be called.

Michael earned the enmity of a group of the clergy when he had his coemperor John IV Laskaris blinded at the end of 1261. The patriarch Arsenios Autoreianos, who had crowned Michael earlier in the year, now excommunicated the emperor, and a group grew up that maintained the legitimacy of the Laskarid, rather than the Palaiologan, line. The patriarch continued his opposition to the emperor over this issue and in 1265 a synod deposed and exiled Arsenios. His followers, the so-called Arsenites, maintained loyalty to the deposed patriarch and their agitation was closely related to the

political feeling in support of the Laskarids. Arsenios thus fitted the mold of the Byzantine ecclesiastical leaders who were mistreated by an emperor for demanding a high standard of moral behavior.

Michael VIII also immediately had to meet strong opposition from the West in the person of Charles of Anjou, brother of King Louis IX of France, who had been selected as king of Sicily and Naples by the papacy. Like the Norman rulers before him, Charles sought to build a Mediterranean empire for himself and to shore up the Latin principalities in the East. In 1267 he put together a large anti-Byzantine alliance, including Baldwin II (former emperor of the Latin empire), William II Villehardouin of Achaia, Pope Clement IV, the Greek principalities of Epiros and Thessaly, and the Slavic states of Bulgaria and Serbia. Fortunately for Byzantium, Michael VIII was a match for the diplomacy of Charles of Anjou, primarily by promising the papacy agreement to a union of the churches, first to Clement IV and then Gregory X, both of whom preferred reunion of the churches to the plans of Charles for the reconquest of Byzantium. Michael also forged alliances with Hungary, the Tatars of the Golden Horde in Russia, and the Mamlukes in Egypt, thus effectively encircling his enemies with allies who were favorable to the empire. He also managed to play the Venetians and the Genoese off against each other and, finally, he signed independent treaties with the maritime republics for fixed terms, which, although they continued the practice of leaving trade in Italian hands, allowed Byzantium some flexibility and bargaining power in dealing with each of them.

One of Michael's most difficult tasks was the attempt to expand imperial power in Greece. Epiros and Thessaly remained stubbornly independent, and the latter was an especially intransigent enemy of the empire; Michael also devoted considerable resources in an attempt to destroy the principality of Achaia in the Peloponnesos. In all these efforts, however, Michael was hindered by Charles of Anjou's ability to provide aid to his allies in the Greek peninsula.

Pope Gregory X, meanwhile, insisted that the emperor finally make a final statement of the union of the churches, and, of course, recognize papal supremacy. Michael was compelled to accept, and in 1274 the Second Council of Lyons formally proclaimed the submission of the Orthodox church to the papacy, on the basis simply of the emperor's statement and without any representation of the Byzantine church. The agreement accepted not only papal primacy but also the doctrines of purgatory and the *filioque*. Naturally, there was considerable opposition to the union in every stratum of Byzantine society, especially since many of the Orthodox had seen first-hand what the domination of the West

might mean. The patriarch of Constantinople refused to accept the supremacy of the pope and he was forcibly removed and replaced with a more pliant bishop, John of Bekkos. The other Greek successor states and the Slavic kingdoms all likewise rejected the union and joined in their opposition to the deal brokered by Michael VIII. In addition, the resistance continued to rally around the blinded emperor John IV as the representative of Laskarid, as opposed to Palaiologan, legitimacy, and the Arsenites kept this issue alive. The emperor's policy of church union, however, did gain time for Michael VIII in his struggle with Charles of Anjou.

Box 13.4 St. Sava of Serbia

St. Sava (1175–1235) was the founder of the Serbian independent church and one of the leading figures of his age. His life was remarkable and full of adventures and achievements of all kinds. It also provides a wonderful view of the relationship between Byzantium and the Christian peoples of the Balkans at the time. He was born the youngest son of Stefan Nemanja (reigned 1165/8–96), grand zupan of Serbia, but he abandoned political life, preferring instead to become a monk at Mount Athos, where he lived first at the monastery of Panteleimon and then at Vatopedi. In 1198 his father, who by then had also become a monk at Athos, sent Sava to Constantinople to seek permission to found a Serbian monastery on the Holy Mountain. The emperor Alexios III agreed and Sava became the founder of Hilandar monastery (1208), which still remains today a Serbian monastery at Athos.

In 1207 or 1208 Sava chafed against the Latin takeover of Mount Athos and he fled to the Studenica monastery in Serbia, taking his father's relics with him. Probably while he was there, Sava wrote a biography of his father, who was considered a saint immediately after his death. This work was especially important in the early Serbian tradition, not only because it is one of the earliest lives of Serbian saints, but much more because, by glorifying the family of Stefan Nemanja and linking it with the Serbian church and the Byzantine tradition, it provided the Serbian monarchy with an especially strong foundation. In addition, the *Life* of Stefan Nemanja stressed the connection between the kings of Serbia and monasticism, especially as practiced in the monasteries of Mount Athos – since both Stefan and his son Sava became monks.

One of the most interesting aspects of this early part of Sava's career was his relationship with his brother, Stefan the First-Crowned (grand zupan 1195–1217, king 1217–27). Stefan was first married to Eudokia, niece of the Byzantine emperor Isaac II Angelos and daughter of the future Alexios III. Stefan, however, repudiated Eudokia around 1200 and, about 1207, he married Anna, granddaughter of Enrico Dandolo, the doge of Venice and one of the leaders of the Fourth Crusade. The reason for these actions undoubtedly was the changing political reality in the Balkans, as Byzantine power weakened and then collapsed in 1204, and Stefan began to lean toward the West for political alliances.

At the same time, Stefan's rule was challenged by his elder brother Vuko, and Sava, in possession of the relics of their father and control of the greatest monastery in Serbia, had leverage in the dispute between his two brothers, which seems to have been settled, temporarily at least, by a kind of division of the kingdom. Meanwhile, Stefan negotiated with the papacy and in 1217 he was crowned king by a representative of the pope. There has been much scholarly controversy about Sava's attitude to this turn toward the West, and it seems impossible now to know how he felt.

What seemed to trouble Sava more was that Serbia lay along the fault-line between East and West, in the years after the Fourth Crusade, at a time when conditions were terribly confused. The immediate thought that the westerners would overrun all the East waned, especially with the foundation of the so-called Empire of Nicaea and the Despotate of Epiros as successor states, and Serbia – of course – was independent of all the warring states. The church of Serbia, however, was subject to the archbishop of Ochrid, which lay at the time within the Despotate of Epiros.

Sava realized that the best hope for the independence of the Serbian church (and perhaps even the Serbian state) lay in alliance with the enemy of Epiros and probably the most serious enemy of the Latins, Theodore I Laskaris, the emperor of Nicaea. As it turned out, Sava and Theodore were distantly related, since the emperor and Sava's father had been married to two sisters. In 1219 Sava journeyed to Nicaea and managed to secure from the emperor exactly what he wanted: he was consecrated the archbishop of the independent (autocephalous) Serbian church; henceforth the archbishops of Serbia were to be chosen by the Serbian bishops themselves, without recourse to the patriarch, although they were to honor the patriarch as the first of the bishops of the Orthodox church.

The result of this agreement was of considerable significance: the Serbian church was granted independence. By the same token the independence of the Serbian state was acknowledged and supported, and a strong link was forged between the rising power of Nicaea and that of the Serbian monarchy. At a single stroke the coronation of Stefan strengthened both Serbia and the Empire of Nicaea.

Sava then set about to strengthen the Serbian character of his church, by replacing Byzantine bishops with local candidates, on the one hand, and, on the other, by providing Slavonic liturgy and literature for the western coastal areas of Serbia, which had been under strong Latin influence. There is no reason to regard Sava as an opponent of Rome, any more than he was an opponent of Byzantium. He was willing to work with both to provide a unified church and culture to his people.

Sava studied Byzantine canon law, which he translated into the Serbian context and which became the basis for Serbian religious and secular law. He also strongly opposed the dualist heresy of the Bogomils, which his father had also fought against. When Stefan the First-Crowned died in 1227 and was succeeded by his son Radoslav, there was a danger that the new king might be willing to sacrifice the independence of the Serbian church for political reasons. Perhaps because of this – but also perhaps because the forces of the Third Crusade had recently failed in their attempt to take Jerusalem – Sava set out for Jerusalem in 1229. He visited all the holy places and returned home via Mount Athos and Thessaloniki. The early 1230s witnessed turmoil in Serbia, in part because of growing Bulgarian influence, and in 1234 Sava decided to resign, probably for personal reasons. That same year he set sail once again for the Holy Land, narrowly escaping a pirate raid and a fierce storm on his way. He visited Jerusalem, Egypt (then under the control of the Ayyubid dynasty), the monasteries of the Egyptian desert, and Mount Sinai. From there he returned to Palestine before visiting Constantinople (still then occupied by the Latins). While there he accepted the invitation of Tsar John Asen II of Bulgaria (who was a relative of his) to visit Bulgaria, and during his visit, in January of 1236, he died.

St. Sava's life was a remarkable one and it strongly demonstrates many of the characteristics of the age, the political and religious struggles in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade, and the rise of the Christian Slavic states of the Balkans. But his greatest importance is the inspiration he provided to the Serbian people. In the words of Dimitri Obolensky, "He remains by far the most popular saint of his people; revered as their ever-present protector, at home and abroad; a familiar figure depicted in icon or fresco in every church of the land, from the grandest of royal *zaduzbine* to the humblest wayside chapel; and, far transcending the bounds of religion, he is a national hero, endlessly celebrated in legend, poetry, and song" (*Six Byzantine Portraits*, p. 169). There is a

fresco of him at Mileseva monastery in southwestern Serbia, where the saint's body was brought for burial.

FURTHER READING

Dimitri Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits*. Oxford, 1988, pp. 115–72.

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In 1281 Martin IV became pope and he reversed papal policy, actively supporting the ambitions of Charles and going so far as to condemn Michael as a schismatic – even though Michael had offered his submission to the papacy and had earned the hatred of many Byzantines for his action. The anti- Byzantine alliance formed once again and King Stefan Uroš II Milutin (1282– 1321) of Serbia invaded Macedonia. In this dangerous situation Michael VIII once again relied on his diplomatic abilities. He negotiated an understanding with King Peter III of Aragon, the son-in-law of Manfred of Sicily, who was encouraged to attack Sicily from the rear. Michael also spread Byzantine gold liberally through Sicily, where resentment had developed against Charles of Anjou, especially after he levied special taxes to help pay for the expedition against Constantinople. At the end of March 1282 a rebellion broke out in Sicily against Angevin rule, the notorious Sicilian Vespers. Charles, who was ready to attack Constantinople, was forced to divert his expedition to Sicily in a vain attempt to put down the revolt. When the Aragonese fleet arrived in August of the same year they drove the Angevins from the island and Charles was unable again to threaten Constantinople.

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de Clari, Robert, a lesser noble of the Fourth Crusade who provides a somewhat different point of view than Villehardouin. E. H. McNeal, trans., *The Conquest of Constantinople: Translated from the Old French of Robert of Clari*. New York, 1936.

de Villehardouin, Geoffrey, Marshal of Champagne and of Romania, knight of the Fourth Crusade and uncle of Geoffrey I Villehardouin, Prince of Achaea from 1209 onward. His account of the conquest (*De la Conquête de Constantinople*) is among the fullest and naturally presents the viewpoint of the western nobility. M. R. B. Shaw, trans., *Chronicles of the Crusades: Joinville and Villehardouin*. Harmondsworth, 1963.